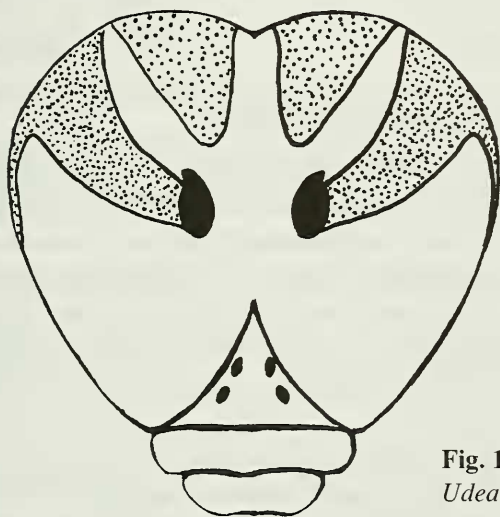


**THE FIRST WILD LARVA OF *UDEA FULVALIS* (HB.) (LEP.: PYRALIDAE)  
RECORDED FROM THE BRITISH ISLES**

MICHAEL JEFFES

*33 Moors Close, Hurn, BH23 6AL.*

ONE ADVANTAGE of being a teacher interested in Lepidoptera is that children occasionally bring in interesting "finds". On 21 May 1997 a boy called Paul Jackson and his sister Lisa brought in a small green moth larva and asked me to identify it. This task I often find difficult with such small larva, but this particular specimen, at first glance, looked remarkably like the photograph, by Skinner (1996), of *Udea fulvalis*. The larva had been found on Parsley *Petroselinum crispum* growing in their garden, I did not have any of the French uncurled variety so I placed in the container two Labiate species I had in my garden, namely Bergamot *Monarda didyma* and Red Dead Nettle *Lamium purpureum*. During that night and the following day it fed sparingly only on the *Monarda* but spun no web of any sort. On the 23 May uncurled Parsley was provided. The larva fed on this but again no web was spun until 25 May when a loose web was constructed on the end leaflets joining it to the tissue. The larva was very similar to Skinner's description but also worth noting for identification purposes is that the thoracic legs are black except for the very tips which were pale.



**Fig. 1.** Head pattern of final instar of *Udea fulvalis* Hb. (front view).

During the night of 27/28 May the larva changed into the final instar and moved to the outside of its flimsy web. On 20 May it was placed on a large growing parsley plant. The larva stayed near the top of the plant and very loosely spun several of the outermost leaflets together making an angled hideaway. It lived deep inside this very loose tent-like structure, which was two or three times as large as the larva itself. On 2 June it descended to the bottom of the container and rolled itself in a decaying leaf. It pupated on the 6 June in muslin, having been disturbed. The moth, a female, hatched during the day on 25 June. The main flight period in Christchurch is usually

late July to mid August, the first specimens being seen on 19 July in 1997. The species was common this year with over ten being seen on a single *Buddleia* in one night.

In conclusion it is important to note how easy to recognise the larva is – in brief: light-green colour, two dark thoracic plates to the rear of the head, predominantly dark thoracic legs and distinctive head pattern (Fig. 1). Also, the larva is said (eg. Goater, 1986) to feed on Labiates but this larva was found on a plant belonging to the Compositae family. During May and early June the larvae were extensively searched for on all labiates on the nearby fields and in my garden on culinary sage and other cultivated labiates. As the larva is distinctive and was fairly conspicuous in its web I feel the natural foodplant in Britain may not be Labiate; either that or its web spinning habits may be different in the wild.

#### References

- Goater, B., 1986. *British Pyralid Moths*. Harley Books, Colchester.  
Skinner, B., 1996. Pyralid Moths in Profile: Part 3 – *Udea fulvalis* (Hübner). *Entomologist's Rec. J. Var.* **108**: 108-109.

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#### Two further notable beetles from Bexley, north-west Kent

*Lebia cyanocephala* (L.) (Carabidae): of this rare species, now considered endangered, my friend Keith C. Lewis took a specimen at Chalk Wood in the above district on 26.vi.1989 in a baited pitfall trap sunk in sandy soil with some moss, under mixed leaf canopy. The species is in general restricted to calcareous soils and in fact there is (as the name of the wood suggests) some chalky ground not far from the spot. My sole experience of *L. cyanocephala* is of an example taken by sweeping *Hypericum* at Box Hill, Surrey, 28.vii.1943. The Bexley capture is the only post-1970 record that I am aware of.

*Omalius septentrionis* (Thoms.) (Staphylinidae): I detected a specimen of this now uncommon beetle – mostly northern, as its name implies – among some of Mr Lewis's Bexley captures, taken at Joydens Wood (adjacent to Chalk Wood) again in a baited pitfall trap, sunk through two to three inches of pine needles. A considerable number of southern and midland records appeared for the first time in Fowler & Donisthorpe (1913. *Col. Brit. Isl.* **6**: 242), which is remarkable in view of its rarity today, at least in the former region. Carrion in woods seems the most usual habitat.

I am indebted to Mr Lewis for the details of these two notable finds and permission to publish them. On his capture of *Staphylinus caesareus* Ced. in Joydens Wood, see Allen, 1995. *Ent. Rec.* **107**: 101.– A.A. ALLEN, 49 Montcalm Road, Charlton, London SE7 8QG.